

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----302111Z 064751 /73

P 301745Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3715

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 5284

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IT
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA

1. ON MARCH 30, I CALLED ON INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA. HE CLEARLY LIVES UP TO HIS REPUTATION OF BEING ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST AND MOST ENERGETIC OF THE SENIOR ITALIAN POLITICIANS. THE CONVERSATION, AT HIS VOLITION, CONCENTRATED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON COMMUNIST PROBLEMS.

2. THE PCI: COSSIGA STARTED TO DISCUSS THE PCI BY SAYING THAT UNFORTUNATELY THE DC HAS TO DEAL WITH IT, THERE BEING NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE IN VIEW OF THE DISASTROUS CONDITION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY. COSSIGA SAID THERE HAD BEEN REAL PROGRESS TOWARD LIBERALIZATION WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN RECENT TIMES BUT THAT THIS PROCESS OF "REVISIONISM" HAD BEEN STOPPED DEAD WITHIN THE LAST MONTH OR TWO. I WAS STOPPED BECAUSE OF BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS. INTERNALLY, THE HARD CORE OF THE PARTY, THE TRADE UNIONISTS, REVOLTED AGAINST THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PARTY WAS COOPERATING WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL AND, IN PARTICULAR, ON THE ECONOMIC AUSTERITY MEASURES. EXTERNALLY, THERE ARE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT MOSCOW PRESSURED THE PCI
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LEADERSHIP INTO HARDENING ITS LINE TO CONFORM TO TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST ORTHODOXY. HE SAID THE FIRST CONCRETE SIGNS OF THE NEW HARDENED ATTITUDE CAME FROM THE RESULTS OF THE MADRID COMMUNIST "SUMMIT." ACCORDING TO COSSIGA, THE SUMMIT ORIGINALLY HAD TWO OBJECTIVES: A PUBLIC DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM MOSCOW AND A CRITICAL LINE

TOWARD SOVIET AND EASTERN EUROPEAN TREATMENT OF
DISSIDENTS. NEITHER OF THESE THINGS CAME OUT OF MADRID BECAUSE
BERLINGUER AT THE LAST MINUTE CHANGED
HIS LINE IN RESPONSE TO PRESSURE FROM
MOSCOW, PRESUMABLY VIA CERVETTI WHO VISITED MOSCOW
AT THE CPSU'S REQUEST IN LATE JANUARY. COSSIGA
SAID THAT PRIOR TO THE MADRID SUMMIT, THE PCI LEAD-
ERSHIP WAS ALSO WORKING ON A DOCUMENT WHICH WOULD
HAVE BEEN A UNILATERAL PCI DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
FROM MOSCOW. ALTHOUGH DRAFTS OF THAT DOCUMENT
WERE VISIBLE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, THEY AND THE
WHOLE PROJECT HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT. CON-
CLUDING THIS DISCUSSION COSSIGA SAID THAT HE
BELIEVES THE SO-CALLED "REVISIONISTS" IN THE PCI
(AMONG WHOM HE IDENTIFIED BERLINGUER, BUFALINI,
PICCHIOLI AND SPRIANO, ETC.) TO BE SINCERE IN
THEIR EFFORTS TO DEMOCRATIZE THE WESTERNIZE THE
PCI. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, IN THE MINORITY AND,
AT THE MOMENT, VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE. WHILE
TIME IS ON THEIR SIDE, COSSIGA SAID, IT IS NOT
CLEAR WHETHER THE MARCH OF EVENTS WILL PROVIDE
ENOUGH TIME TO ALLOW THE PROCESS OF REVISION TO
BE WORKED OUT.; THE PRESENT MAJORITY OF THE
PARTY IS NOT REVISIONIST AND IS, THEREFORE, A
SOURCE OF GREAT WORRY AND CONCERN TO ALL DEMOCRATS
IN ITALY.

3. SOVIET PRESSURE: IN DISCUSSING SOVIET PRESSURE
ON THE PCI, COSSIGA REFERRED TO JANUARY VISIT TO
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ROME BY EDITOR OF SOVIET LITERARY GAZETTE, CHAKOVSKY
(ROME 2720). LATTER MADE POINT OF FACT THAT HE
WAS NOT A GUEST OF THE PCI. HE APPEARED ON ITALIAN
TV WHERE HE REFLECTED SOVIET HARD LINE, PARTICULARLY
VIS-A-VIS DISSIDENTS WHOM HE DESCRIBED IN THE MOST
DENIGRATING AND INSULTING WAY. OFF-SCREEN, ACCORDING
TO COSSIGA, HE MADE NO SECRET OF FACT THAT HE WAS
SPEAKING TO AND SEEKING TO REASSURE THE PCI'S
HARD CORE TRADITIONALISTS AND COULD CARE LESS
ABOUT OFFENDING THE PCI'S MIDDLE CLASS ELECTORATE.

4. YUGOSLAVIA: DISCUSSION OF THE PCI LED
COSSIGA TO YUGOSLAVIA, WHERE POSSIBLE POST-TITO
PROBLEMS ARE A SOURCE OF CONSTANT WORRY FOR THE
CPI LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS FOR THE ITALIAN GOVERN-
MENT. HE SAID THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN GIVING
PRIORITY TO THEIR EFFORTS TO "NORMALIZE" RELATIONS
WITH YUGOSLAVIA. IT WAS SOVIET CONCERN TO ACCOM-
MODATE THE YUGOSLAVS THAT FINALLY LED TO THEIR

"FLEXIBILITY" AT THE BERLIN CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST PARTIES LAST YEAR. THROUGH THIS EXERCISE, THE SOVIETS APPEARED TO BE MAKING SOME HEADWAY WITH THE YUGOSLAVS. HOWEVER, SAID COSSIGA, THE SOVIET EFFORT FELL APART DURING BREZHNEV'S RECENT VISIT TO BELGRADE WHEN HE PROPOSED THAT THE YUGOSLAVS BE THE BLOC'S PRINCIPAL GO-BETWEEN WITH THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, DEMANDED RIGHTS OF PASSAGE FOR SOVIET MILITARY UNITS, PLUS SOVIET AIR BASES AND NAVAL BASES IN YUGOSLAVIA. TITO TURNED HIM DOWN FLATLY. ACCOUNTS OF THIS EXERCISE WHICH HAVE REACHED ITALY COUPLED WITH ACCOUNTS OF THE SOVIET INCREASES IN CONVENTIONAL ARMAMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE HAVE PROFOUNDLY DISTURBED THE SO-CALLED REVISIONIST LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----302110Z 063688 /73

P 301745Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3716

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 5284

EXDIS

5. PCI FINANCING: IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION ABOUT PCI FINANCES, COSSIGA SAID THAT YEARS AGO THE PARTY GOT LARGE AMOUNTS OF DIRECT FINANCING THROUGH THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN ROME. HE SAID THAT THIS SOURCE OF FINANCING HAS FALLEN OFF IN RECENT YEARS AS INCOME

FROM TRADE WITH EASTERN EUROPE AND FROM PCI INVESTMENTS IN DOMESTIC BUSINESSES HAS INCREASED. NEVERTHELESS A CERTAIN BUT LIMITED AMOUNT OF DIRECT FINANCING STILL CONTINUES, COSSIGA SAID.

6. SPAIN: COSSIGA VOLUNTEERED THAT, IN HIS RECENT MEETING WITH THE SPANISH MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR, HE HAD URGED SPAIN TO LEGALIZE THE PCE. THIS IS DESIRABLE, HE SAID, TO PREVENT AN ILLEGAL COMMUNIST PARTY FROM BECOMING A POLE OF ATTRACTION FOR VIOLENT LEFTIST EXTREMISTS WHO COULD BECOME MARTYRS TO THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN. IT IS ALSO DESIRABLE TO PREVENT PEOPLE LIKE MITTERAND (FROM THE TONE OF VOICE, OBVIOUSLY NOT ONE OF COSSIGA'S FAVORITES) FROM MAKING AN ISSUE OF THE PCE'S ILLEGALITY AND THROUGH IT OF SPAIN'S LACK OF DEMOCRACY. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT COULD, HE SAID, SERIOUSLY COMPLICATE THE ISSUES OF SPAIN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE EC
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AND NATO.

7. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION: TWICE IN THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION COSSIGA URGED THAT WE EXCHANGE INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY ON SOVIET AND EASTERN BLOC RELATIONS WITH THE PCI, PCF, AND PCE. HE SAID THAT ITALIAN SOURCES ARE PRESENTLY LIMITED BECAUSE ITALIAN INTERNAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM HAD FALLEN INTO DISREPAIR IN RECENT YEARS. HE ADDED THAT HE IS TRYING URGENTLY TO REBUILD IT. HE SAID THAT INFORMATION ON RELATIONS OF THESE PARTIES WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE DOMESTIC ROLE THAT THESE THREE PARTIES PLAY IN THE RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE ATTITUDES OF THE SOVIETS TOWARD THESE PARTIES CAN BE IMPORTANT FOR THE NATO ALLIANCE. IN RESPONSE TO THIS REQUEST I REMAINED NON-COMMITTAL.

8. POLICE REFORM: IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION COSSIGA CANDIDLY DISCUSSED HIS PRESENT DIFFICULTIES ABOUT THE DEMILITARIZATION AND UNIONIZATION OF THE ITALIAN POLICE ("POLIZIA DA SICUREZZA"). HE SAID THAT DEMILITARIZATION IS NOT THE ISSUE OF IMPORTANCE, POINTING OUT THAT NO OTHER MAJOR WESTERN COUNTRY DEPENDS ON MILITARIZED POLICE. THE REAL ISSUE, HE SAID, IS UNIONIZATION, WHICH MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE DC ARE AGAINST. HIS VIEW IS THAT UNIONIZATION CANNOT BE AVOIDED AND THE LONGER IT IS PUT OFF THE HIGHER PRICE THE GOVERN-

MENT AND THE SOCIETY WILL HAVE TO PAY. HE SAID IF
IT IS DONE NOW IT CAN BE LIMITED TO AN AUTONOMOUS
UNION MADE UP ONLY OF POLICEMEN AND WITHOUT EX-
TERNAL TIES, AND WITHOUT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE. IF
WE WAIT, HESAIID, UNTIL THE COMMUNIST PARTY OR
CGIL HELPS THEM GET THE RIGHT TO UNIONIZE, THEY
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WILL BE TIED TO THE CGIL. IT IS, THEREFORE,
IMPORTANT IN HIS VIEW THAT THE GOVERNMENT ACT
WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

9. US POLICY TOWARD ITALY: I TOOK THE OCCASION
TO REVIEW US POLICY TOWARD ITALY IN ACCORDANCE WITH
THE RECENT MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT. COSSIGA
REACTED POSITIVELY, COMMENTING WITH PARTICULAR
ENTHUSIASM ON MY COMMENTS THAT WE WOULD MAKE A
GREAT EFFORT TO ENLARGE US CULTURAL PRESENCE IN
ITALY IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE CLEARLY OUR TIES
TO AND CONCERN ABOUT ITALY'S FUTURE.

10. COMMENT: WE DO NOT SHARE ALL OF COSSIGA'S
ANALYSIS REGARDING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE PCI.
IT IS TRUE THAT A CERTAIN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS
WAS UNDERWAY WHICH NOW APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN
STOPPED. HOWEVER, THIS PROCESS WAS MORE IN TERMS
OF SPECIFIC POLICIES, MANY ADOPTED FOR TACTICAL
PURPOSES, AND IT DID NOT SEEM TO INFLUENCE THE
HIGHLY CENTRALIZED STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS OF
THE PARTY WHICH, FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, WOULD
REPRESENT THE MOST SERIOUS LONG-TERM THREAT TO THE
SURVIVAL OF A PLURALISTIC, DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY
SHOULD THE PCI GAIN POWER HERE. REGARDING THE
MADRID "EUROCOMMUNIST SUMMIT" WE DO NOT BELIEVE
THAT BERLINGUER EVER WISHED TO HAVE IT SERVE AS
A FOCAL POINT FOR A FRONTAL ATTACK ON THE SOVIETS,
AND THEREFORE IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE PCI,
APPARENTLY WITH CERTAIN SOVIET ENCOURAGEMENT, UNDER-
TOOK TO CONTROL CARRILLO AND MARCHAIS AT MADRID.
FINALLY, THERE IS NO INDICATION TO SUPPORT COSSIGA'S
SUGGESTION THAT THE PCI HAS GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERA-
TION TO BREADING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH MOSCOW. IN
FACT, THE PCI AS WELL AS THE SOVEIT PARTY HAVE
ENDEAVORED TO ENSURE THAT THE PROBLEMS IN THIS
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RELATIONSHIP DO NOT REACH THE BREAKING POINT. WE
BELIEVE THE SO-CALLED "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE"
TO WHICH COSSIGA REFERRED IS A PRIVATE STUDY WHICH
WE UNDERSTAND THE PCI HAS STARTED TO ASCERTAIN
WHY CERTAIN ABERRATIONS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE BUILDI-
ING OF SOCIALISM IN EASTERN EUROPE WITH THE OBJECTIVE
OF SEEKING TO AVOID THESE IN THE EVOLUTION OF
POLICIES AND ACTIONS OF THE PCI. GARDNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, COMMUNISTS, POLITICAL PARTIES, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 30-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ROME05284
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770109-0520
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977036/aaaaafcp.tel
Line Count: 286
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c335f8b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3109506
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IT, US, (COSSIGA, FRANCESCO), (GARDNER, RICHARD N)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c335f8b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009